



Free Roaming Equids and Ecosystem Sustainability Network

Delegates from over 90 different organizations convened at the Free-Roaming Equids and Ecosystem Sustainability Summit, held May 29-31, 2019 in Reno, Nevada in search of common ground to achieve the goal of “healthy herds on healthy rangelands.” They ignited a “non-political” grassroots movement now known as the Free-Roaming Equid and Ecosystem Sustainability Network or FREES.

FREES seeks to enhance communication and engage diverse stakeholder groups in meaningful dialogue as we work together to realize a common goal of “healthy herds on healthy rangelands.” Participation in FREES is open to all individuals and organizations, regardless of perspectives. FREES seeks to integrate sound science with local knowledge, human perceptions, and values into a collaborative national network of information sharing, planning, and action. FREES is committed to seeking to better understand and respect individual opinions while striving to develop meaningful, actionable objectives to be implemented judiciously, compassionately, humanely, and expeditiously.

FREES endorses diversity and seeks to engage diverse publics in developing solutions that are consensus based and agreeable to the preponderance of public land and free-roaming equid stakeholders. FREES recognizes that there is not one single solution, and as such strives to create innovative and practical strategies that are scientifically sound and are within the purview and management authority of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the USDA Forest Service, Native American Tribes, and the states. To fund the strategies, FREES recognizes that the U.S. Congress and Executive Branch, state legislatures, non-governmental organizations, and private individuals must be fully engaged. *As there are multiple coalitions and groups convening to address the needs of equids, it should be clarified that FREES delegates are participating in the process as representative of different interested agencies and organizations and not as members of the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board.*

At the Summit, working groups were created to address specific needs and issues. These groups will have monthly conference calls facilitated by the Langdon Group (a third-party neutral consulting firm), which also facilitated the 2019 Reno Summit. The working groups fully engaged in September 2019.

1. Population Management Working Group, led by Redge Johnson and Callie Hendrickson

- a. Assess and improve gathering methods and population growth suppression strategies
- b. Re-think the status quo for holding facilities and distribution of horses
- c. Identify and understand successful efforts for collecting and analyzing data

2. Rangeland Conditions and Habitat Working Group, led by Gary McCuin and Barry Perryman

- a. Identify common misperceptions regarding federally defined Wild Horse and Burro habitat conditions
- b. Identify ecological and cultural “hot spots”

3. Outreach and Communication Working Group, led by Terry Messmer

- a. Develop collaborative committee focused on public messaging/education and congressional strategy
- b. Develop organizing structure and funding strategy for working groups
- c. Develop a structure and process to build trust and consensus in FREES

Immediate Implementation Actions

FREES has started planning for a May 2020 Free-Roaming Equid Summit in Wyoming. Your attendance at this Summit would be encouraged and appreciated.